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1 – Some homeowners living near ITC fire not satisfied with answers at town hall, KHOU, 4/24/19

<https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/itc-fire/some-homeowners-living-near-itc-fire-not-satisfied-with-answers-at-town-hall/285-90503d70-8d21-46bf-8d97-3b4e60f8032a>

ITC fire investigators caught heat from people afraid smoke made their families sick. Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia invited representatives from every agency investigating to a town hall at Milby High School Wednesday night. Some homeowners left upset by what authorities did not say.

2 – Did heavy rainfall cause a train derailment, massive ethanol fire in Fort Worth?, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 4/24/19

<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/community/fort-worth/article229635064.html>

Did an incredibly powerful rainfall early Wednesday contribute to a train derailment in south Fort Worth — one that caused a massive ethanol fire, forced residents from about 20 area homes and killed three horses?

3 – Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, Houston residents push for study on rail yard contamination, Houston Chronicle, 4/24/19

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/energy/article/Congresswoman-Sheila-Jackson-Lee-Houston-13793603.php>

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality said Wednesday that it would ask state health officials to conduct a cancer-cluster study in a northeast Houston neighborhood where residents have lived for decades with toxic chemicals and contamination from a nearby railroad yard.

4 – After years of progress, the number of Americans breathing polluted air is rising, report says, CNN, 4/24/19

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/24/health/polluted-air-counties-lung-association/index.html>

More Americans are breathing air that will make them sick, according to the American Lung Association's annual State of the Air report. Deregulation and climate change are largely to blame.

5 – Bill targeting Louisiana repeat air polluters fails in House committee, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 4/25/19

<https://www.nola.com/environment/2019/04/bill-targeting-louisiana-repeat-air-polluters-fails-in-house-committee.html>

The Louisiana House Natural Resources and Environment Committee rejected a bill Wednesday (April 24) that would have required air monitoring systems for industrial facilities that repeatedly violate air pollution rules.

6 – Industry's pitch: Limit stream protections by flow, E&E News, 4/24/19

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2019/04/24/stories/1060211133>

In a request that could leave fewer streams with federal protection, industry groups are asking the Trump administration to further limit the number of streams regulated by the Clean Water Act.

7 – With new Corps of Engineers flood study of Amite, Darlington Reservoir an interest, concern for some, Baton Rouge Advocate, 4/23/19

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_eef89108-66d7-11e9-bb4b-1fb890015750.html

With \$3 million from Congress last year, the Corps of Engineers is taking a fresh, three-year look at other flood control ideas floated in previous Amite River and Tributaries studies and seeking out new ideas for taming the Amite and its many tributaries threading through a basin now home more than a half-million people, Corps officials said.

8 – Safety board wants EPA to act on refinery chemical, E&E News, 4/24/19

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2019/04/24/stories/1060212005>

The Chemical Safety Board is calling on EPA to address hydrofluoric acid, a toxic chemical used by petroleum refineries. In a letter to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler, CSB Interim Executive Authority Kristen Kulinowski urged EPA to review and update its 1993 study on the substance.

9 – OPINION: Dallas wants to protect the Great Trinity Forest, but who will protect the forest from Dallas?, Dallas Morning News, 4/23/19

<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/04/23/dallas-wants-protect-great-trinity-forest-will-protect-forest-dallas>

The Texas Buckeye Trail, which begins in South Dallas where Bexar Street ends and meanders through the Great Trinity Forest, is off-limits now. Not all of it is closed, mind you; not the mile-or-so's worth of winding concrete ribbon poured atop the original pathway, which lawyer Ned Fritz, his wife, Genie, and their acolytes cleared through the buzzing, verdant woodlands that stretch 6,000 acres from the city's south and center.

10 – CAAP will harm pipeline industry, San Antonio Express-News, 4/24/19

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/article/CAAP-will-harm-pipeline-industry-13793012.php>

In January, the city of San Antonio announced a sweeping initiative called the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, or CAAP, to eliminate fossil fuels. While the Texas Pipeline Association and the Texas midstream industry greatly respect community-driven efforts, we encourage San Antonio not to risk one of the state's most vital industries and to avoid imposing excessive costs on residents.

11 – Texas A&M to improve air quality, energy efficiency at Houston airports, Houston Chronicle, 4/24/19

<https://www.chron.com/business/bizfeed/article/Texas-A-M-to-improve-air-quality-energy-13791730.php>

A planned Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station is designed to improve energy efficiency and air quality at Bush Intercontinental and Hobby airports.

Some homeowners living near ITC fire not satisfied with answers at town hall

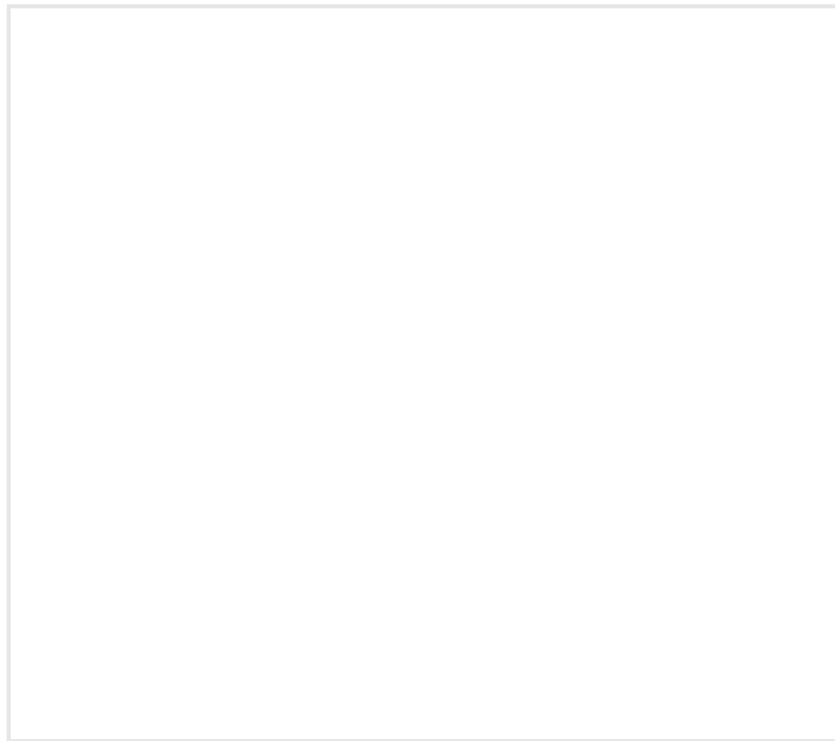
An EPA representative told the town hall crowd that the members of the agency pulled 144,000 barrels of contaminates from the Houston Ship Channel.

HOUSTON — ITC fire investigators caught heat from people afraid smoke made their families sick.

Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia invited representatives from every agency investigating to a town hall at Milby High School Wednesday night.

Some homeowners left upset by what authorities did not say.

Between an hour-long line of homeowners, veterans and people recording every hard-hitting question on cellphones, Angela Hamilton, her husband and 17-year-old daughter worried.



“What is going to happen to us,” Hamilton said.

They live near the ITC tank farm that burned last month. Hamilton fears smoke they breathed for weeks made them sick.

Hamilton, who survived aneurysm surgery last September and a stroke the day after Christmas, claims she regained good health until the fire.

Now, there is a growth on her stomach and the mom whose son, Johnathan, has been missing for four years is scared pollution will take away everything she has left.

"It's awful," Hamilton said.

Congresswoman Garcia wanted answers, too.

"We're one of the most monitored areas in the country but this happened," she said. "We just can't let it happen again."

An EPA representative told the town hall crowd that the members of the agency pulled 144,000 barrels of contaminants from the Houston Ship Channel.

However, elevated levels of benzene remain along the road near ITC's tank farm.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) claims cleanup cost them \$1.7 million so far.

While Congresswoman Garcia wants punishment for those responsible, Hamilton and others who spoke just want to know their water, air and families are safe. Some walked out with doubts.



EXPLOSION CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENT SPREAD TO HORSE STABLE, KILLS 3 HORSES

Several railroad cars derailed and caught fire early Wednesday morning in Fort Worth. The fire spread to a nearby horse stable on Atkins Street, causing the owners to evacuate the horses. They were able to save 7 of 10 horses. BY [AMANDA MCCOY](#)

FORT WORTH

Did heavy rainfall cause a train derailment, massive ethanol fire in Fort Worth?

BY [GORDON DICKSON](#)

APRIL 24, 2019 05:02 PM, UPDATED APRIL 24, 2019 05:23 PM





EXPLOSION CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENT SPREAD TO HORSE STABLE, KILLS 3 HORSES

Several railroad cars derailed and caught fire early Wednesday morning in Fort Worth. The fire spread to a nearby horse stable on Atkins Street, causing the owners to evacuate the horses. They were able to save 7 of 10 horses. BY **AMANDA MCCOY** ✉

Federal investigators and railroad officials say it's too early to elaborate on a specific cause of the derailment of 25 tanker cars carrying ethanol that toppled like dominoes in the early Wednesday incident [south of East Berry Street, between Interstate 35W and South Riverside Drive](#). At least four of the tanker rail cars burned in the fire, although some of the other rail cars remained intact, with their flammable liquid cargo still inside.

Raw video footage shot after sunrise Wednesday -- many hours after the 12:30 a.m. incident -- and shown on WFAA Channel 8 television in Dallas-Fort Worth showed storm water rushing underneath the [Union Pacific Railroad](#) main line.

At the time of the derailment, the Fort Worth area was enveloped in a [thunderstorm that was dumping up to two inches per hour in some areas](#).

RAW VIDEO: Railroad cars carrying ethanol crash in south Fort Worth, causin...



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EXPLOSION CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENT SPREAD TO HORSE STABLE, KILLS 3 HORSES

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Union Pacific Railroad, which owns the tracks where the derailment occurred and was operating the train that toppled, declined to comment on whether weather was a factor.

“We have not made a determination on the cause yet,” Union Pacific Railroad spokeswoman Kristen South said. “We are working with NTSB on a cause.”

The [National Transportation Safety Board](#) will investigate the incident and on Wednesday afternoon was en route to Fort Worth to begin that work. NTSB is an independent arm of the federal government that investigates major accidents involving aircraft, railroads, highways and other parts of the nation’s transportation grid.



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Several railroad cars derailed and caught fire early Wednesday morning in Fort Worth. The fire spread to a nearby horse stable on Atkins Street, causing the owners to evacuate the horses. They were able to save 7 of 10 horses. BY [AMANDA MCCOY](#)



Homes were evacuated early Wednesday in several Fort Worth neighborhoods when train cars caught fire after derailling, fire officials said. The Union Pacific train derailed west of the intersection of Riverside and East Berry. *Amanda McCoy STAR-TELEGRAM*

ARE TANKER CARS SAFE?

The NTSB is mostly concerned with investigating accidents to prevent similar occurrences in the future, a spokesman said.

For example, NTSB might turn its focus onto why the derailed cars caught fire, and whether anything could have been done to prevent the rupture of the cars.

Five NTSB members were en route to Fort Worth on Wednesday afternoon, agency spokesman Christopher O'Neil said.

“Rail accidents are selected for investigation (we do not investigate every rail accident) based upon the totality of the circumstances, as reported, surrounding an accident, and what we may learn from investigating the accident,” O’Neil said in an email. “In this instance, the carriage of ethyl alcohol in tank rail cars, and the reported breach of several cars carrying that cargo, is an area of interest for the NTSB.”



EXPLOSION CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENT SPREAD TO HORSE STABLE, KILLS 3 HORSES

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The NTSB has long been concerned about the [safe transport of hazardous material in tanker cars](#).

The Fort Worth Fire Department also declined to comment on weather as a possible factor, spokesman Kyle Clay said. Officials from the department left the scene Wednesday afternoon, leaving the cleanup to railroad officials and a small number of contractors.



Homes were evacuated early Wednesday in several Fort Worth neighborhoods when train cars caught fire after derailling, fire officials said. The Union Pacific train derailed west of the intersection of Riverside and East Berry. By Glen Ellman

RESIDENTS POINT TO STORM RUNOFF

Dario Diaz's parents have complained to officials before about this area being dangerous for trains during flooding. His family lives nearby on Atkins Street, where they keep many animals such as horses and dogs.



EXPLOSION CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENT SPREAD TO HORSE STABLE, KILLS 3 HORSES

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but failed to take action.

However, Wednesday's derailment took place about six miles east of last year's flooding deaths, and the area of the derailment wasn't mentioned in the 2016 report.

PREVIOUS INCIDENT

A check of the [Federal Railroad Administration database](#) sheds only a little light on whether other accidents have occurred in the vicinity of Wednesday's derailment.

For example, an accident report was filed in 2007 after a BNSF Railway train, using the Union Pacific line, crashed into a pickup that had apparently stalled and been abandoned on the tracks, at a crossing near East Shaw Street and V.C. Shamblee Drive. No injuries were reported.

No other reports of train-related incidents were readily available in that area.





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Several railroad cars derailed and caught fire early Wednesday morning in Fort Worth. The fire spread to a nearby horse stable on Atkins Street, causing the owners to evacuate the horses. They were able to save 7 of 10 horses. BY [AMANDA MCCOY](#)

But ethanol also is a very common product found in numerous household goods.

Ethanol is commonly used as an ingredient in motor fuels. Also, it is commonly used in lotions, hand sanitizers and other cosmetics, as well as in alcoholic foods and beverages and even candy, according to the council.

Railroads are commonly used to transport ethanol from producers to manufacturers of these goods.

Ethanol is transported using a standard tanker rail car approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, according to the Renewable Fuels Association.

The so-called DOT 111A rail cars are inspected before, during and after each shipment to ensure safety equipment is operating correctly, according to the association.

Today, 85 percent of rail cars used to transport ethanol are less than seven years old.

Staff Writers Domingo Ramirez Jr., Kaley Johnson and Mitch Mitchell contributed to this report, which includes information from the Star-Telegram archives.

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After years of progress, the number of Americans breathing polluted air is rising, report says

By [Jen Christensen](#), CNN

Updated 3:38 AM ET, Wed April 24, 2019

How deadly is air pollution? 01:07

(CNN)More Americans are breathing air that will make them sick, according to the American Lung Association's annual [State of the Air](#) report.

The country had been making progress in cleaning up air pollution, but during the Trump administration, it has been backsliding, the report says. [Deregulation](#) and [climate change](#) are largely to blame.

President Donald Trump [made a pledge](#) in his 2017 State of the Union address to "promote clean air and water," but his administration has reversed or proposed [rollbacks to](#) major air pollution protections, emissions standards and drilling

and extraction regulations. He's also [slashed](#) the EPA budget; the [current proposal](#) is to cut the budget by a third.



Climate change is making allergy season worse

"We have a long list of things we are concerned about this administration doing," said report author [Janice Nolen](#), the American Lung Association's assistant vice president of national policy. "We have to keep cleaning up the air, and we have to deal with climate change first and foremost, especially after seeing the harm of what is happening now."

The new report says that 141.1 million Americans -- 4 in 10 -- live in counties that have air with unhealthy levels of particle pollution or ozone. That's an increase of 7.2 million people from last year's report. Wednesday's report, the organization's 20th, looks at data on particle pollution and ozone pollution from 2015 to 2017.



Particulate pollution in the air we breathe kills thousands a year, study finds

Particle pollution is the mix of solid and liquid droplets in the air, according to the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#). It can come in the form of dirt, dust, soot or smoke. Particle pollution comes from coal- and natural gas-fired plants, cars, agriculture, unpaved roads and construction sites.

[Ozone](#), also called smog, essentially causes a [sunburn](#) of the lung, irritating and inflaming

the lining of our lungs when we breathe it in. It can leave us winded, cause [asthma](#) attacks, make us more susceptible to infection and even shorten our lives.

The country as a whole recorded more days with hazardous air quality than ever from 2015 to 2017, the researchers said, defined as air that reaches "emergency

conditions" on the government's [air quality index](#).



Air pollution linked to 3.2 million new diabetes cases in one year

Eight city areas had recorded the highest number of days with unhealthy spikes in particle pollution since the American Lung Association started monitoring pollution this way: Fairbanks, Alaska; Missoula, Montana; Bismarck, North Dakota, Bend-Pineville, Oregon; Yakima and the Spokane-Spokane Valley-Coeur d'Alene area in Washington; and Salinas and Santa Maria-Santa Barbara, California.

An increasing number -- more than 20.5 million people -- lived in counties with year-round particle pollution problems. Topping that list was the Fresno-Madera-Hanford, California, area; followed by Bakersfield, California; Fairbanks, Alaska; Visalia, California; Los Angeles-Long Beach, California; San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, California; the Pittsburgh-New Castle Weirton, Pennsylvania-Ohio-West Virginia area; El Centro, California; the Cleveland-Akron-Canton, Ohio, area; and Medford-Grants Pass, Oregon.



One simple -- but really hard -- solution to stop climate change

California, while typically progressive on environmental issues, appears a disproportionate number of times on these bad air lists. It's in part because of topography that traps ozone and pollution in. The sunny, warm climate [doesn't help](#) and neither do the pollution-generating activities of the 33 million people living there. Cars, trucks, factories, oil and gas extraction, and power plants all create pollution.

"California is getting better, but it is still a problem and is still is at the top of our lists," Nolen said.

Wildfires are also a big source of air pollution and are becoming a bigger problem with climate change. Notably, the large wildfires of 2018 aren't included in this data, said Nolen, who has worked on State of the Air every year for the past 20 years.

"We've made great strides cleaning up some of the sources [of pollution]. We have much cleaner vehicles, power plants are doing better, but a lot of this is challenged by the current administration's rollbacks and with climate change, because we have such extreme weather patterns of drought and wildfire and that can add to particle pollution," Nolen said.

[Climate change](#) brings higher temperatures, drought, floods, wildfires and other extreme weather that makes it harder to breathe and makes pollution worse.



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"We are seeing the impact of climate change now. Something has to be done," Nolen said.

There are some cities in the report that the American Lung Association thinks are getting it right. Only six qualify as "cleanest," meaning they have no high ozone or high-particle-pollution days and rank among the 25 cities with the lowest year-round particle pollution. They are Bangor, Maine; Burlington-South Burlington, Vermont; Honolulu, Hawaii; Lincoln-Beatrice, Nebraska; Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, Florida; and Wilmington, North Carolina.

Bill targeting Louisiana repeat air polluters fails in House committee

Posted Apr 24, 4:39 PM



NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

A chemical facility in Norco shoots flames and smoke into the air above St. Charles Parish in 2012.

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By [Tristan Baurick, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune](#)

The Louisiana House Natural Resources and Environment Committee rejected a bill Wednesday (April 24) that would

have required air monitoring systems for industrial facilities that repeatedly violate air pollution rules.

The [bill by state Rep. Joseph Bouie, Jr.](#), D-New Orleans, was aimed at improving monitoring at chemical plants and fuel refineries, and alerting workers, emergency responders and nearby residents when emissions exceed healthy levels. It would have required an air quality monitoring system along the property boundary of any facility that violated air pollution rules three or more times in two years.

“This would ensure that the habitual offenders are held accountable,” Bouie told the committee.

Of the the nearly 500 large chemical plants, fuel refineries and other facilities regulated under the Clean Air Act in Louisiana, only four have had enough violations to warrant the new monitoring equipment, according to the state [Department of](#)

[Environmental Quality](#). DEQ officials declined to name the facilities.



37 chemical releases reported in St. James Parish over 14 month period

Committee members questioned how much each facility would have to pay to purchase and maintain the monitoring systems, which ranged from \$10,000 to \$250,000 per year.

“The issue shouldn’t be cost,” Bouie argued. “If we found them to have three violations, the cost should be compared to the cost of lives.”

Committee members [rejected Bouie’s legislation, House Bill 175](#), with 12 members voting against the bill and four in favor.

The chemical industry opposed the bill, calling it unnecessary and likely to cause fear in communities with large facilities.

“We already have (monitoring) systems in place, and they’re working,” said Robert Schromm of the [Louisiana Chemical Association](#).

Chemical industry lobbyist Bob Baumann said the data collected by the monitoring systems could show the presence of chemicals that cause little or no harm in low doses.

“There may be substances that scare you, but that doesn’t mean they exceed anything,” he said. “People will be frightened.”

Cancer study questions need to move students farther from LaPlace chemical plant

Wilma Subra of the [Louisiana Environmental Action Network](#) said similar monitoring systems used by some facilities in the state only check for harmful emissions a few times per month. The monitoring systems proposed in the bill would have continuously checked air quality.

The four committee members who voted for the bill have industrial air pollution issues in their districts.

“We need this legislation because we do have bad actors,” said [Rep. Patrick Connick](#), R-Marrero, who said he can smell chemical plant emissions from his home. “Why protect the cheaters of our laws?”

Subra wasn't surprised the bill failed to advance to the full House.

"We've had similar bills a number of times, and we've always lost," she said.

Industry's pitch: Limit stream protections by flow

Ariel Wittenberg, E&E News reporter
Published: Wednesday, April 24, 2019



The public comment period for the Trump administration's proposed Waters of the U.S. rule recently closed. Montgomery County Planning Commission/Flickr

In a request that could leave fewer streams with federal protection, industry groups are asking the Trump administration to further limit the number of streams regulated by the Clean Water Act.

The Trump administration's Waters of the U.S., or WOTUS, rule would limit federal protections to streams that flow continuously or intermittently if they are fed by groundwater. It would erase protections for so-called ephemeral streams that flow only following rainfall or snowmelt, which account for at least 18% of streams nationwide, according to data from the U.S. Geological Survey.

But the proposal does not outline a clear path for landowners to determine whether streams are fed by groundwater or rainwater, saying only that protected intermittent streams must have surface water flowing continuously during "certain times of a typical year" ([Greenwire](#), Feb. 18).

Now, industry groups generally happy with the WOTUS rule are asking the administration to protect streams that flow only for a minimum number of days or with a minimum amount of water in them.

In written comments filed last week, multiple trade organizations representing the building, energy and agriculture industries are asking EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to institute minimum flow requirements for streams regulated under the Clean Water Act.

The groups, which have generally been supportive of the Trump administration's rollback, say such requirements would add clarity to the proposal.

A coalition of oil industry groups, led by the American Petroleum Institute, suggests that streams should have to consistently flow for at least 90 days to be afforded Clean Water Act protections. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association wants the requirement to be doubled to 185 days.

NCBA Chief Environmental Counsel Scott Yager said the group chose that number because it would require streams to flow for at least half a year in order to be regulated.

"We think there is some language you can add to the regulatory text for specificity," he said.

Some groups, like the National Association of Home Builders, leave the question more open-ended. They suggest there should be some kind of specific metric of either minimum days of flow or flow amounts. But they also say they would be happy if the Trump administration clarified that WOTUS would cover only streams with "seasonal" flow and replaced language dictating surface water flow continuously during "certain times of a typical year" to be protected by the Clean Water Act.

"We are flexible on what that distinguishing line should be, but we do think it would help everyone if there were some kind of national baseline," said NAHB Program Manager for Environmental Policy Evan Branosky. "There may be a few ways to get at this, and we hope the administration is open to talking about this further."

It's unclear exactly how many streams would lose federal protections if the Trump administration were to adopt any kind of minimum flow metric.

Two hydrologists told E&E News they weren't aware of any studies about the average number of days intermittent streams flow nationwide. Both said it is possible for intermittent streams to flow for less than 90 days, and that, like streams that flow only after rainfall, such waterways are likely more numerous in drier regions of the country, like the Southwest.

But studying how many streams like that exist would not be scientifically useful, the hydrologists said, because even streams that flow for only a short amount of time can have significant impacts on downstream waterways by supplying cool, clean water.

"Forcing flow-duration thresholds to define intermittency reflects a poor understanding of how water and watersheds function and would remove even more critical stream ecosystems from protection," said Mazeika Sullivan, who directs Ohio State University's Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park.

Environmentalists and scientists have opposed the Trump administration's WOTUS rule and argued that the Obama administration's Clean Water Rule was easier for laypeople to understand because it regulated any stream with physical indicators of having a significant impact downstream: bed, banks and ordinary high-water mark.

Industry groups say basing regulations only on those physical features would regulate too many waterways.

In comments on the WOTUS proposal, most said they would be against any attempt by the Trump administration to include those physical indicators in a regulation.

"We strongly urge the agencies not to add those terms to the definition of 'tributary,'" the American Farm Bureau Federation wrote. "Because occasional storm events are enough to establish a bed, banks and ordinary high-water mark, countless features on otherwise dry land ... would become jurisdictional."

But NCBA is asking the Trump administration to use the presence of bed and banks — in addition to minimum flow requirements — to further limit which streams would be protected under the rule.

Yager said his group appreciated EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler's claim that WOTUS would allow property owners to look at a waterway and know whether it was regulated, but "we don't think the proposal does that."

"If you require bed and banks as part of the definition, what would give our producers a really easy first cut at the definition of WOTUS?" he said. "You would have a producer go out there and look for a bed and banks. If they aren't there, it's not regulated. But if you do have them, then step two is figuring out if the stream meets a flow metric."

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_eef89108-66d7-11e9-bb4b-1fb890015750.html

With new Corps of Engineers flood study of Amite, Darlington Reservoir an interest, concern for some

BY DAVID J. MITCHELL | DMITCHELL@THEADVOCATE.COM APR 24, 2019 - 4:28 PM



Many areas of Watson and Denham Springs flooded during the torrential storms of August 2016.

Advocate file photo by PATRICK DENNIS

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DENHAM SPRINGS — The Amite River and Tributaries study, the big federal flood protection analysis of the Amite River Basin, has a long history in Louisiana.

Congress first authorized the study in April 1967 when Louisiana Sens. Russell Long and Allen Ellender were still roaming the halls of Capitol Hill and were decades from having federal courthouses or office buildings named after them.

These U.S. Army Corps of Engineers analyses, spurred by chronic flooding from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s, helped spawn the long-delayed Comite River Diversion Canal that is now on a path to final construction after the 2016 flood injected new momentum and money.

But, with \$3 million from Congress last year, the Corps of Engineers is taking a fresh, three-year look at other flood control ideas floated in these previous studies and seeking out new ideas for taming the Amite and its many tributaries threading through a basin now home more than a half-million people, Corps officials said.



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Open houses planned for new round of Amite River drainage studies by Army Corps of Engineers

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Public meeting set to discuss risk management along Amite River, its tributaries

Travis Creel, a Corps regional technical specialist from the New Orleans District, told a gathered audience at the Denham Springs public library that projects being considered include

the Darlington Reservoir, dredging of the lower Amite and Bayou Manchac, using Spanish Lake as a flood storage area with protections for homeowners and others, smaller detention areas along Manchac and in the upper Amite watershed and even home elevations.

"We'd like to see this list of alternatives expand," he added during a public hearing Wednesday for the early stages of the study.

A handful of St. Helena and East Feliciana parish residents were among those at the library off U.S. Hwy. 190 and were there, in part, to keep tabs on the Darlington Reservoir, one of the old flood control ideas ditched 25 years ago.

The reservoir plan had called for damming the Amite near Darlington and creating a water storage area covering thousands of acres to prevent flooding down stream.

Dredging? Levees? Reservoirs? What's the best way to control Baton Rouge-area rivers?

The reservoir plan spurred years of controversy in the 1980s and early 1990s that largely pitted some upriver landowners opposed to losing their property to the future reservoir with down river political leaders, including then-Gov. Edwin Edwards. Amid political opposition, cost concerns kept the project on the drawing board.

A taste of those old feelings re-emerged Wednesday as Ron McMorris, 72, of Ethel, voiced his worries about the apparent lack of public interest in the meeting and his opposition to the reservoir.

"All of my land will be underwater, OK? And I'm very much against that part of it," he said of the new study.

Later, McMorris said he owned land along the Amite in East Feliciana and didn't think he should have to give it up "to save these fools down here that don't know how to build on high ground."

Other residents from the Grangeville area of St. Helena Parish who own land just downstream of the reservoir suggested only a handful of people opposed the reservoir in the past and saw a future man-made lake as a recreational opportunity that could help their parish.

"If people come to fish and boat and have fun, they're going to buy food. They're going to buy fuel. It'll help St. Helena Parish, I think," said Lois "Chee-Chee" Dunn, 75, who showed up at the meeting with her husband, son and others.



RELATED

How will south Louisiana spend \$1.2B flood-fighting credit? Levees, diversions, dredging?

The competing views of McMorris and the Dunns are just a small taste of the kinds of questions the Corps of Engineers will have sort through as it reviews a range of projects culled from past studies and other information gathering.

The Corps may also have to work through some public skepticism about the effectiveness of another round of studies as McMorris' concerns about the lack of residents at the meeting spun off into a discussion about whether study would result in anything concrete.

"So at the end of the day, what is all of this going to solve? If I live for another 50 years, what would I see different," asked Ed Lagucki, 64, of Baton Rouge.

McMorris responded that the gathered Corps officials had pretty much made up their minds already but just weren't telling anyone yet.

Corps officials said later they had done the best they could to attract public attention and that their decisions would be based on science.

In a later interview, Creel said the final study could end up calling for a series of projects working together.

He said the Corps analysis will take into account sea level rise and the predicted effects of the unbuilt the Comite River diversion and separate waterway improvements that the Corps plans in East Baton Rouge Parish.

He added that the analysis will also consider the impact of locally funded proposals, like the Laurel Ridge Levee extension that Ascension Parish government has proposed building in the basin.

Sarah Bradley, the Corps project manager, said her agency plans to have a tentative selected plan ready in the fall and draft report and environmental impact statement by December.

Corps officials hope to have a final chief's report ready by the fall of 2021, which sets the stage for funding from Congress for construction.

Safety board wants EPA to act on refinery chemical

Courtney Columbus, E&E News reporter

Published: Wednesday, April 24, 2019



EPA headquarters in Washington. Robin Bravender/File/E&E News

This story was updated at 2:10 p.m. EDT.

The Chemical Safety Board is calling on EPA to address hydrofluoric acid, a toxic chemical used by petroleum refineries.

In a [letter](#) to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler, CSB Interim Executive Authority Kristen Kulinowski urged EPA to review and update its 1993 study on the substance.

In the letter, Kulinowski calls for EPA to assess refineries' risk management plans and decide whether there are safer, commercially viable alternatives available.

"In the last four years, the CSB has investigated two refinery incidents where an explosion elevated the threat of a release of HF," she said in a statement.

Those incidents occurred at the Superior Energy Co. LLC refinery in Wisconsin in April 2018 and at the former Exxon Mobil Corp. refinery in Torrance, Calif., in February 2015. Safety violations by Exxon led to the 2015 explosion, CSB said in a 2017 report ([E&E News PM](#), May 3, 2017).

CSB held a public meeting after each incident. At the meetings, residents raised concerns about the use of hydrofluoric acid.

In the December 2018 gathering following the explosion in Superior, some community members called for the refinery to use a safer alternative, and some called for Wisconsin to ban the use of the substance.

"Refinery workers and surrounding community residents are rightly concerned about the adequacy of the risk management for the use of hazardous chemicals like HF. The EPA should review its 1993 HF study to ensure the health and safety of communities near petroleum refineries utilizing HF," Kulinowski added.

CSB is a federal agency with an annual budget of about \$12 million that is tasked with carrying out investigations of industrial chemical accidents. The Trump administration has proposed eliminating the agency in its past three budget requests ([E&E News PM](#), March 12).

In the letter to EPA, Kulinowski said CSB doesn't have the authority to ban HF or modified hydrofluoric acid, or to force refineries to use alternative chemicals.

Fred Millar, an independent consultant based in the Washington, D.C., area and former lobbyist for the environmental group Friends of the Earth, welcomed the letter.

"I'm glad that they're trying to focus attention to HF, a particularly dangerous situation," said Millar. "We keep using it anyway, despite the fact that there are alternatives."

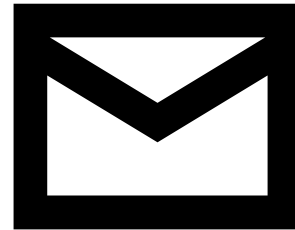
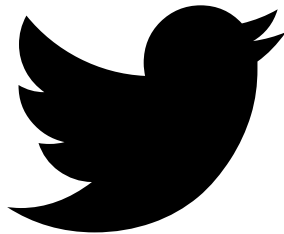
But, he added, "having a new study is really a very weak response."

"EPA is reviewing the Chemical Safety Board letter," an EPA spokesperson said in an email.

Dallas wants to protect the Great Trinity Forest, but who will protect the forest from Dallas?



Robert Wilonsky, City Columnist



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DALLAS NEWS

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The Texas Buckeye Trail, which begins in South Dallas where Bexar Street ends and meanders through the Great Trinity Forest, is off-limits now. Not all of it is closed, mind you; not the mile-or-so's worth of winding concrete ribbon poured atop the original pathway, which [lawyer Ned Fritz](#), his wife, Genie, and their acolytes cleared through the buzzing, verdant woodlands that stretch 6,000 acres from the city's south and center.

But today, as you approach the wide, sinuous Trinity at trail's end, you're greeted by a steel guardrail wrapped in reflective red and white. In the middle is a white sign with all-cap black letters: "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT." An easy enough obstruction to step over.

On the other side, only a few feet away, lies the river as seen by Dallas' first settlers, the river that defines and defies the city. Once, for an all-too-brief moment on this spot, there was an overlook topped with sandstone

boulders upon which hikers could sit for a spell to marvel at the view and soak in the silence.

But all of that has fallen into the river; so, too, has the concrete path laid by city engineers, devoured by an insatiable Trinity that has vanquished these banks in recent years. Whole pieces of it can be seen lying on the riverbanks, carcasses of concrete. Ned and Genie Fritz's trail, paved over using bond money, looks now like the cover of Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends*.



SPONSORED CONTENT

Toyota believes hydrogen fuel cells have the potential to be the power train of the future

By Toyota

I'd gone Tuesday to the Buckeye Trail because one day earlier, with little comment or discussion, two Dallas City Council committees moved to the whole body something titled "Great Trinity Forest Resolution." Among other things, it calls for the city manager to undertake a "comprehensive survey of the Great Trinity Forest, and, continue with acquisition, preservation and maintenance such that the residents and visitors of Dallas may further interact and experience the diverse ecosystems" that are there.

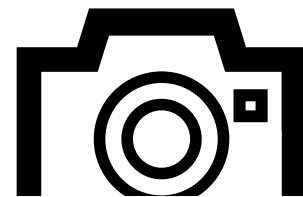
The resolution came with little background materials; no one knew who had brought it to council. At a morning meeting of the Quality of Life, Arts and Culture Committee, Lake Highlands' rep Adam McGough asked how the resolution reached the day's agenda on its way to a May 8 vote. "The genesis was the mayor," Assistant City Manager Joey Zapata said. Far North Dallas' Sandy Greyson, the committee's chair, added the resolution was the council's way to say "we value the asset and want to move forward to make sure it's protected."

Mayor Mike Rawlings told me Monday what he has said before publicly — that he hopes to see the Trinity Forest turned into a preserve. He mentioned, several times, President Theodore Roosevelt and the creation of the national parks and forests. Rawlings hopes to follow suit and render untouchable the 6,000-acre forest in the floodway.

"I have wanted to make sure we put a line around that forest and protect it from any development, any major changes in it, and really let Dallas have its place for the wild," Rawlings said. "It truly is a special place."



(Rose Baca/Staff Photographer)



The resolution is at once vague and comprehensive, in the estimation of accountant Ben Sandifer, the longtime Trinity guide and protector. It's redundant and unnecessary, too, Sandifer said, pointing to the 11-year-old *Great Trinity Forest Management Plan* that the city published the year Ned Fritz died. The plan "was never implemented and gathers dust," Sandifer says.

He wonders, as should we all: How can we be sure this city will protect a forest it has violated time and again while carving out a golf course few will ever use? How can Dallas at once safeguard its treasure while at the same time allowing gravel-mining and shingle dumping and industrial uses along its fringes? How do you trust a city that tried for decades to plant a toll road in the floodway, and that builds expensive taxpayer-funded trails through the forest and has to close them when they become too dangerous to navigate to the very end?

"A treasure of information exists with certain citizens that will never see light of day because the city of Dallas has violated the trust they were sworn to uphold," Sandifer told me Monday, after I showed him the resolution. "The

profound history and beauty of the Great Trinity Forest is known but to a few. The reason it is not shared openly is not one of selfishness, it's that the information will fall into the hands of the wrong people. Who do wrong things. On a constant basis."

The Great Trinity Forest is a magic land, where each step takes you farther from civilization and closer to the heart of the city. It does not exist by accident. We still have the forest only because Ned and Genie Fritz willed it so, cobbling together parcels of the wild and fending off those who would have drowned nature in concrete and clear-cut the forest to nothing.

It's nice that the mayor, on his way out the door, wants to take steps to further protect it; if nothing else, his resolution gave me reason to write about the forest again, to remind Dallas again of beauty that sprawls throughout the south — the city's better-looking-but-worse-off half. Rawlings said Monday that he has waited to do this for years — clarify the forest's boundaries, define each parcel —but could never find a willing city manager. T.C. Broadnax signed on, but it still took a year and a half to get it this far, Rawlings said.

"If we don't figure out how to package that and contain it for future generations, shame on us," said the mayor. "And it hasn't been done. That's what amazes me."

But we can't even get right the trail without which there would have been no Great Trinity Forest, which was given its name by the Fritzes after they fought off the politicians who hoped to turn the river into a channel, and who tried to pave our paradise.





(Kim Ritzenthaler/Staff photo)



On May 4 — the day voters will be asked whom they want to serve as the new mayor, and only four days before the vote on this resolution to protect the forest — Genie Fritz will turn 95 years old. I called her Monday to tell her about it, and ask for her thoughts.

"I just don't trust any of the city people," she said with the weary chuckle of someone who had survived countless battles. "I just wonder if the people who really want to sell all that concrete and do all that bad stuff won't come back with another plan to put a toll road down there."

She really just wants the city to rename the Buckeye Trail after Ned. That's all. Because without Ned — and Genie — none of this would exist to even talk about protecting. Not the trail. Not the forest. Not any of it. Ned Fritz, Sandifer said, "is the only reason, the singular reason, the Great Trinity Forest exists today," Sandifer said.

"One thousand years from now, Ned Fritz will still be the man who is credited with preserving it."

Protecting it, for Ned and Genie Fritz, is the least we can do in return.

CAAP will harm pipeline industry

By Thure Cannon, For the Express-News Published 5:14 pm CDT, Wednesday, April 24, 2019



The city's climate action plan's goal is carbon neutrality, which will take the area away from safe and abundant supplies — provided by pipelines such as these — and to higher cost energy.

In January, the city of San Antonio announced a sweeping initiative called the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, or CAAP, to eliminate fossil fuels. While the Texas Pipeline Association and the Texas midstream industry greatly respect community-driven efforts, we encourage San Antonio not to risk one of the state's most vital industries and to avoid imposing excessive costs on residents.

CAAP mandates switching to a renewable-dependent energy model, undermining an existing stable and affordable energy portfolio, which will lead to rate hikes that will hit low-income residents the hardest. Currently, through the use of state-of-the-art emissions-reducing technologies, the oil and gas industry continues to deliver clean, reliable energy at the lowest cost possible.

Recommended Video

Over the past two decades, companies in the midstream oil and gas sector have substantially reduced methane emissions — both on an absolute basis and on a per-unit of gas-produced basis. Reductions have been achieved by adopting emission reduction practices into company operations and using lower-emitting equipment.

...n declining steadily since the early 1990s, with absolute emissions declining by 15% between 1990 and 2014 and methane emissions per unit of gas produced declining by 43% in that same period, according to a 2016 Natural Gas Council report citing data from the EPA's Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gases.

Unfortunately, many of the purported benefits outlined in CAAP far overstate any real benefits and come at great cost to taxpayers. TPA and its member companies continue to support rationally crafted initiatives that will help make our environment cleaner. CAAP, however, is not the answer, as it will lead to a disruption in energy availability while driving energy costs higher for all San Antonians — especially those who can least afford it.

Thure Cannon is president of the Texas Pipeline Association.

Texas A&M to improve air quality, energy efficiency at Houston airports

By [Andrea Leinfelder](#) Published 11:06 am CDT, Wednesday, April 24, 2019



Travelers move through Bush Intercontinental Airport, Tuesday, March 20, 2018, in Houston. (Mark Mulligan / Houston Chronicle)

A planned Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station is designed to improve energy efficiency and air quality at Bush Intercontinental and Hobby airports.

The potentially \$30 million-plus project, largely funded by the state Comptroller's Texas LoanSTAR Revolving Loan Program, is expected to reduce the airports' utility costs by more than \$1.3 million annually.

Airport ratings: **Houston airports maintain 4-star Skytrax rating**

"In Texas A&M we've found a partner with the right expertise that, paired with our airport industry know-how, will advance the science of operating this large-scale enterprise more efficiently and cost effectively from an energy standpoint," Houston Airport System Director Mario Diaz said in a news release.

Recommended Video

The project will replace outdated equipment, controls, baggage handling systems and lighting at the airports. Four chillers will be installed at a new utility plant, and a solar

passenger record

AM University System with hands-on experience

in construction management.

The Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station is an engineering research agency and member of the Texas A&M University System.

Warming prevents air quality improvement — report

Sean Reilly, E&E News reporter

Published: Wednesday, April 24, 2019



The American Lung Association released its latest "State of the Air" report. Ian Barbour/Flickr

For a second year, the American Lung Association is warning that climate change is blighting a trend toward improved air quality.

Warmer weather and changing rainfall patterns "create continued challenges to long-term progress in reducing harmful air pollution under the Clean Air Act," the public health advocacy group said in its latest annual "State of the Air" [survey](#), released this morning.

Despite cleanup measures for sources like motor vehicles and power plants, "we're seeing pollution coming up, and that to us points to climate change as being a major factor," Paul Billings, the association's senior vice president for public policy, said in an interview this morning.

Ozone, the main ingredient in smog, is a lung irritant closely linked to the production and consumption of fossil fuels. Fine particulates, technically known as PM2.5 because they are no wider than 2.5 microns in diameter, are tied to a variety of heart and lung ailments.

More than 141 million Americans, about 43%, were exposed to unhealthy levels of either ozone or fine particulates from 2015 through 2017, the three-year period covered by the report. That figure represents about a 5% increase over the comparable total noted in last year's report, which spanned 2014 through 2016, and an approximately 13% jump over the figure cited two years ago.

The three years covered by the new report were the three warmest on record, according to NOAA. Not only do higher temperatures encourage ozone formation, but hotter, drier weather helps spark wildfires, which have been increasingly prevalent and prolonged in the West.

For example, the swath of coastal California that spans the cities of Santa Maria and Santa Barbara had previously been on the list of cleanest cities for short-term fine particulate exposure. But in this year's report, it was ranked among eight areas that had their highest-ever number of days with spikes in such particulate pollution, based on a weighted average. Others included Missoula, Mont.; Salinas, Calif.; and the Bend-Prineville area in Oregon.

As has been true in the past, ozone problem areas were clustered in the West and Southwest. Led by Los Angeles, 10 of the 25 cities with the highest number of unhealthy ozone days were in California. By contrast, only seven of those cities were east of the Mississippi River.

On a year-round basis, this year's report found that an inland part of central California encompassing Fresno and Madera was the worst for fine particulate exposure; it also noted, however, that more than half of the 25 worst cities for year-round particulate exposure showed improvement over the levels cited in last year's report.

This marks the 20th year that the lung association has issued the "State of the Air" survey.

Despite the recent uptick in the number of Americans exposed to unhealthy air pollution, the authors note that the 141 million figure in this year's edition is still far below the 166 million total cited in the 2016 report, which covered the period from 2012 to 2014.

Last year's report had also highlighted the threat climate change poses to better air quality ([Greenwire](#), April 18, 2018). And once again, the report criticized the Trump administration for pushing to roll back Obama-era regulations on greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants, oil and gas operations, and motor vehicles.

Both ozone and particulates are among the pollutants for which EPA must periodically review and, if needed, revise its ambient air quality standards, based on Clean Air Act requirements to protect public health and welfare.

The current ozone standard, set in 2015, is 70 parts per billion.

The limits on fine particulate exposure were last changed in 2012. The primary annual standard is 12 micrograms per cubic meter of air; the short-term, 24-hour benchmark is 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

EPA is now reviewing its existing thresholds for both pollutants, with completion required by late next year under a fast-track schedule set in 2018 by then-Administrator Scott Pruitt.